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Salemink, Koen

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CHAPTER 7

Unlocking hidden community assets: Marginal specialization and community resilience of Gypsy-Travelers in the Netherlands¹

Koen Salemink

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Abstract

Enduring social exclusion has forced Gypsy-Travelers to specialize in marginal economic activities. These marginal specializations build on specific skills, attitudes, and strategies which are valuable for the communities' overall development. Today's Gypsy-Traveler communities face a context of rapid economic restructuring, due in part to advancements in technology and digitalization. This paper combines the literatures on the exclusion of Gypsy-Travelers and marginal entrepreneurship to demonstrate the need for recognition of community-specific assets, even those linked to illicit or illegal activities. Based on the Dutch context, a framework is proposed for conceptualizing the possible impact of four community assets on Gypsy-Traveler community resilience. The paper concludes with a discussion of the potential for a community-based approach in the work of, for example, liaison officers and policymakers, which would unlock community assets and strengthen the communities' economic position. The key challenge for practitioners is to counter the dominant, negative discourses on Gypsy-Travelers, while at the same time tempering the possible diverging effects of building on community-specific assets.

Keywords

Gypsy-Travelers, Community Assets, Entrepreneurship, Community Resilience, Marginality

7.1

Introduction

For centuries, Gypsy-Travelers have lived on the margins of societies. The problematic relationship between settled and traveling cultures has been marked by social and spatial exclusion. Whereas mainstream settled society has excluded “the others”, that is the Gypsy-Travelers, these “others” only want to be included “on their own terms” (Sibley, 1998; Powell, 2013a). Economic integration through trading and participating in the settled society’s labor market has proven to be complex. This has underlined the need for Gypsy-Travelers to remain self-reliant and able to live independently, economically and otherwise, from the settled society (Powell, 2013a; MOVISIE, 2013). The long history of both exclusion and economic dependence has resulted in a “hidden economy”, run by Gypsy-Travelers (Sibley, 1998: 99). Traditionally, Gypsy-Travelers have engaged in economic activities that are looked down upon by people in settled society. These often take place out of sight from yet still accessible to settled society (Khonraad and Veldhuijsen, 2009). Researchers and policymakers have long ignored such activities, but the recent literature acknowledges that, in order to fully understand social and economic development, marginal and illegal activities need to be studied as well (Somerville et al., 2015; Smith and McElwee, 2013).

Previous work has pointed out the ambiguous relationship, marked by exclusion and dependence, between Gypsy-Travelers and settled society (Sibley, 1995; 1998; Powell, 2013a). Gypsy-Travelers seem quite aware that they are an “unwanted necessity” in the economic field. In performing their “hidden”

economic activities they have acquired distinctive community assets and a specific entrepreneurial attitude (Salemink, 2014). These assets and attitudes are valuable features of the Gypsy-Traveler community (or culture), and can contribute to the communities’ development and strengthen their economic position.

Building on the author’s experiences with Gypsy-Traveler communities, both as a practitioner and as a researcher, this paper aims to “unlock” the assets of such communities. To do so, it discusses the role of marginal entrepreneurship – or “marginal specialization” – in the everyday lives of Gypsy-Travelers. A key question addressed is what assets have these communities developed to help them cope with exclusion and material hardships. The literatures on marginalization and entrepreneurship are combined in order to assess the potential role of marginal entrepreneurship in creating resilient communities.

The hidden economy is expected to undergo significant change under the influence of wider social developments (Salemink, 2016). The inevitable impact of rapid economic restructuring on traditional entrepreneurial activities, especially in light of advances in technology and digitalization (Townsend et al., 2013; Mariën and Prodnik, 2014), implies a need to revisit Gypsy-Traveler livelihoods. Indeed, the contemporary development towards a digital information society is changing the way that entrepreneurs in general are expected to run their businesses and engage with potential customers.

This paper begins with an account of the socio-economic history of Gypsy-Travelers in the Netherlands. The role of two major policies from the twentieth century is reviewed – the Caravan Dwellers Act and the Civilizing Offen-

sive. Their impacts on Gypsy-Traveler culture and economic activities are then assessed. The next section describes the methodology of the paper and the positionality of the author. The final two sections reflect on community assets that could potentially be used to strengthen the economic position of Gypsy-Traveler communities, and the role practitioners could play in unlocking these assets.

7.2

“The Settled” and “The Traveling”: exclusion, mutual avoidance, and economic dependence

Throughout history, Gypsy-Travelers have been stigmatized by and excluded from settled European societies (Cottaar et al., 1992; Powell, 2008; Shubin, 2011). According to Sibley (1995), the majority of settled people (“the self”) see those who travel, that is, nomadic communities, as “the other”; a deviant and untrustworthy group that threatens the way of life of “the self”. Through a complex system of policies, behaviors, and practices, Gypsy-Travelers were eventually forced into a marginal position, socially and spatially on the fringes of society (Powell, 2013a). Interactions between the settled and traveling communities do exist, but the dominant settled community only turns to the Gypsy-Travelers when undesirable jobs need doing (Sibley, 1995; 1998). Historical examples are the “rag-and-bone men” in the United Kingdom and the “kiepenkerls” (itinerant traders) in the Netherlands and Germany.

Integration into “mainstream society” in general, and the mainstream labor market

and education in particular, have proven problematic for Gypsy-Travelers (Khonraad and Veldhuijsen, 2009; Shubin and Swanson, 2010). Self-employment is a prominent feature of Gypsy-Traveler community economies, yet at the same time unemployment and dependence on the welfare system are considered to be a major problem (Khonraad, 2000; FRANET, 2012; Sollie et al., 2013). Taking a broader perspective, Sibley (1998) discusses the notion of a “hidden economy”. Because of centuries of exclusion, Gypsy-Travelers choose “to mix without integrating” (Sibley, 1998: 99), applying their own terms and interacting as they wish with the settled society (see also Powell, 2008). According to Sibley (1998: 99) Gypsy-Traveler culture, and its norms and values, includes a culture-specific “hidden economy” which would become inoperable if they were to integrate into “the larger society”. As such, Sibley demonstrated that this excluded and marginalized position is partly caused by the settled society, and partly a consequence of the Gypsy-Travelers’ choice to preserve their culture and maintain their economic independence. In light of the Bourdieusian framework of “fields of exclusion” (Bourdieu, 1990; Helsper, 2012), this two-way exclusionary yet ambiguous relationship is particularly complex in the economic field (Salemink, 2016). When economic integration takes place, it does so on the Gypsy-Travelers’ terms.

In the Dutch case, the Gypsy-Travelers’ reserve vis-à-vis integration can be explained by two dominant policies that were aimed at sedentarization and assimilation:

1. the Caravan Dwellers Act (*Woonwagenwet*) and restrictive planning policies in general, and
2. the Civilizing Offensive (*Beschavingsoffensief*)

Table 7.1 | Two dominant policy ideas which have influenced the Gypsy-Travelers willingness to integrate (based on Khonraad, 2000; Khonraad and Veldhuijsen, 2009; Powell, 2013b; Sollie et al., 2013)

	Caravan Dwellers Act (<i>Woonwagenwet</i>)	Civilizing Offensive (<i>Beschavingsoffensief</i>; not an official act)
Key aims	Regulate travel behavior Contain "the gypsy-problem" in designated locations Sedentarization through restrictive planning	"Civilize" the poor, the socially excluded, and the "misfits" Improve living conditions and well-being Assimilate subcultures
Timeframe and focal points	1918-2000 Sedentarization strategies varied through time Large sites designated as "independent communities" until the 1970s Breakdown into smaller sites, from the 1980s until now, in order to stimulate integration No national policy frame since the abolishment in 2000	Throughout the 20 th century Consistent with the ideas of a socially engineered society (<i>maakbare samenleving</i>) prevalent until the 1970s Lost its importance after rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s Multiculturalism in the 1990s Since the early 2000s less tolerance towards minorities
Impact on Gypsy-Travelers	Sedentary housing at designated sites Traveling is no longer possible Gypsy-Travelers consider governments and institutions to be untrustworthy	Distrust towards governments and institutions "Loss of culture" No experienced recognition as a minority

Table 7.1 summarizes the key ideas underlying these two policies, alongside their timeframes and focal points, and their impacts on Gypsy-Traveler communities in the Netherlands.

The main impact of these two policies was that Gypsy-Travelers became sedentarized. As a result, they have experienced a "loss of culture" and do not feel recognized as a minority, even though they are officially acknowledged as a minority within the European Union (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010). The loss of culture stems from institutional and legal restrictions on their traditional economic activities, such as the used-car trade, metal trade, and recycling (Khonraad and Veldhuijsen, 2009; Salemink, 2016). The main issue here is that, traditionally, they were used to running home-based businesses (Khonraad, 2000; FRANET, 2012).

Due to planning restrictions, however, businesses with considerable environmental impacts may no longer be run close to a residential area. The alternative – buying or renting a commercial building on an industrial park – is financially impossible for many Gypsy-Travelers. Often they cannot get a loan from a bank because their caravans or chalets are not considered of value as collateral (Khonraad and Veldhuijsen, 2009).

This set of institutional restrictions has contributed to the Gypsy-Travelers' perception that they are losing their culture and are discriminated against by authorities (Sibley, 1998; Powell, 2013b). Furthermore, the shifts in focal points over the years have made the communities suspicious – or even distrusting – towards national and local governments. Gypsy-Travelers interpret the policy shifts as indicative of institutions

failing to deliver on their earlier promises (FRANET, 2012; Salemink, 2014). They feel they can only rely on their community or their extended family, and they limit interactions with the settled society to those that are strictly necessary. To sustain their livelihood, however, trading with the settled society is necessary (Salemink, 2016).

7.3

Marginal specialization: Gypsy-Traveler culture and community assets

Despite the restrictive policies of the past decades, Gypsy-Travelers in the Netherlands still claim to be an entrepreneurial community (FRANET, 2012; MOVISIE, 2013). From their marginal position, Gypsy-Travelers have specialized in specific economic activities. Mainstream society needs these enterprises, but prefers that they take place in the social and spatial margins, for example, because they are polluting or illegal. Dealing in scrap metal, wastepaper, used cars, and the repair of used products are well-known examples of Gypsy-Travelers specializations (Lucassen et al., 1998; Khonraad, 2000). This paper argues that these marginal specializations play an important role in the entrepreneurial behavior of Gypsy-Travelers. Their excluded position has forced them to be self-reliant – in which that “self” is interpreted either as the household, the extended family, or the community – since they cannot rely on settled society to provide sustainable livelihoods (see also Powell, 2013a; Sollie et al., 2013).

This notion of self-reliance contrasts with dominant discourses in society on Gyp-

sy-Travelers, which depict them as mythical and “imaginary” (Shubin and Swanson, 2010) or as “defiled” (Sibley, 1995) and “anti-social” (Richardson, 2006). The effect of these dominant discourses and their “gazes” is that community assets and in-group mechanisms, which potentially could be capitalized on, remain hidden. This paper therefore attempts to unravel what Sibley (1998) called the “hidden economy.” By recognizing the potential role of marginal economic and entrepreneurial activities, this paper contributes to the debate on creating and enhancing community resilience. Furthermore, by recognizing community-specific norms, values, and cultural traits, it seeks to inform policy and other initiatives aimed enhancing the economic position of Gypsy-Traveler communities.

The relation between the sedentarized Gypsy-Travelers communities and settled society has been problematic throughout history. The paradox in this is that community-building by capitalizing on culture-specific elements could potentially put them at a greater distance from settled society. Differences between the two then become more prominent, which could result in the reproduction of exclusionary processes (Salemink, 2016). The long-term economic, social, and cultural impacts of such an outcome are uncertain, but they need to be considered when unraveling the hidden economy, especially as some community assets may currently be linked to illegal activities.

Marginal economic activities, for example, illicit or illegal entrepreneurship, can contribute to a local or community economy, outside of the purview of statistics or formal representations of the livelihoods of the people or communities concerned

(Williams, 2006). According to Somerville et al. (2015), denying the role of illicit and illegal entrepreneurs in a local economy, in their case the rural economy, results in a misperception of the economic – and thereby social – value of marginal activities: “Illicit rural entrepreneurs may well have multiple business interests that generate employment and develop the (...) economy” (Somerville et al., 2015: 223). Recognizing the importance of marginal economic activities, even activities that are illicit or illegal, is a precondition for better understanding community economies. Smith and McElwee (2013: 129) concluded that recognizing illegal economic activities as a strategy to generate alternative income will aid in unraveling the causes and implications of changes in communities. Yet recognition of this is often hindered by the dominant discourse, as is the case with Gypsy-Travelers.

The discourses around Gypsy-Travelers are framed negatively, since this group is often depicted as tax-avoiding and criminal (Richardson, 2006). A report by the former Inspection of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment concluded that the negligence of local governments and law enforcement has created opportunities for Gypsy-Traveler sites to become criminal hotspots (VROM-Inspectie, 2009). This has led to marginal specialization by Gypsy-Travelers, sometimes resulting in illegal economic activities. The element of negligence, however, is important here. It is worthwhile to investigate whether there is potential for developing a specific community-based approach in which local governments, instead of neglecting the communities and their places of residence, focus on skills, attitudes, and assets.

The practitioners entrusted with such a

task would benefit from an awareness of the assets of the communities they are working with. Current practices, either legal or illegal, stem from the value-creating features of the community or culture, and the fact that these features are used for illegal activities does not preclude their application in legal practices. The key challenge lies in defying prejudice and stereotypes, and contesting the dominant discourse of Gypsy-Travelers being unable to contribute to the wider society. The framework proposed in this paper can guide recognition of these valuable features, or in other words, assets.

7.4

Methodology and positionality

Three building blocks underlie the data for this paper. Each of the three represents a component of my experience with Gypsy-Traveler communities, either as a practitioner or as a researcher, between March 2010 and November 2014. A comparable approach, based on personal accounts, was adopted by Bosworth (2012). His work demonstrates that ethnographic accounts of a particular case can provide “a level of detail unobtainable through more conventional research techniques” (Bosworth, 2012: 504). Moreover, conventional research techniques are not easily applied in relation to Gypsy-Travelers. Even though they are now largely sedentarized (see Photo 1 for an example), they are still considered a ‘hard to reach group’ and they are not keen on allowing outsiders into their homes and lives (Khonraad and Veldhuijsen, 2009). The problematic relation between the settled society and the Gypsy-Travelers is reflected

in researcher-interviewee relations and, as a representative of a settled society institute, the researcher is preferably kept at a distance. Setbacks for researchers regarding permission to conduct or record interviews are quite common and these have to be compensated with lengthy and intensive fieldwork during which one can build a trust relation with members of the community – see for example Sibley's seminal work 'Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West' (1995). Multiple observations and insights can then enable the process of triangulation, which in turn allows for validation and a deeper understanding of the subject of study.

The first building block is my employment as a policy officer for social housing associations from March 2010 until March 2011 in the Dutch province of North Holland. My job at these associations included developing policy for five authorized Gypsy-Traveler sites. The policy-making process required me to regularly visit the sites and liaise with families to determine the needs of the communities. Another aspect of my job during this period was evaluation of welfare programs for so-called "multi-problem families," including Gypsy-Traveler families. This building block is characterized by a somewhat problematic relation with the community, as I was of course a representative of a settled society institute. Showing interest in the lives and family histories of people, and with that making the conversations less formal and more personal, helped in building trust and hence creating a deeper understanding of the everyday lives and activities of Gypsy-Travelers.

The second building block is my subsequent work as an advisor to the Ministry

of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands from March 2011 until November 2014. I advised the Ministry on how changing welfare policies could be made more inclusive towards Gypsy-Travelers. The policy shifts then under way especially involved the decentralization of welfare responsibilities from the national to the local level. During this period, I regularly paid working visits to Gypsy-Traveler communities throughout the Netherlands, and additionally visited municipal offices and studied their policies. These working visits provided valuable insights into the position of Gypsy-Traveler communities in local policies, and the communities' attitude towards these. Again, I was working for a settled society institute, initially creating a degree of distrust among the communities. My mission however – understanding the community-specific impacts of a generic policy – contributed to removing the distrust and helped in getting the conversations going.

The third building block is my research at a university in the Netherlands. These activities involved interviews in Dommelen (Noord-Brabant), Buitenpost (Fryslân) and Opende (Groningen), and ethnographic fieldwork in Emmen (Drenthe) in 2013 and 2014. The ethnographic fieldwork consisted of ten full working days during which I was allowed to accompany a social worker and municipal project manager in Emmen. I joined them on visits to families at various sites and could interview residents, on the condition that they remain anonymous. The key question in this research was how Gypsy-Travelers negotiate ongoing technological change, especially digitalization. The livelihoods of Gypsy-Travelers and their lack of economic integration into the settled society

were prominent topics in these interviews. During this research I was able to build on existing trust relations with gatekeepers and members of Gypsy-Traveler communities. Furthermore, established relations with self-employed professionals who worked as intermediaries for municipalities provided access to several municipal organizations. The latter was quite important, because municipalities are also “not very keen on having a busybody in their organization when it comes to Gypsy-Travelers”, as the social worker in Emmen explained. Therefore, for

this type of research it is crucial to build trust relations with actors of both the settled society and the Gypsy-Traveler community.

The section below presents a proposed framework for recognizing community assets, based on my experiences in the three positions described above, and operationalizes this for the Dutch context. I then reflect on the extent to which practitioners could play a role in “unlocking” the community assets of Gypsy-Travelers.



Photo 7.1 | A typical modern-day Gypsy-Traveler caravan on a sedentary site in Emmen (Photo: the author)

7.5 Marginal specialization and community resilience: unlocking the “hidden economy”

7.5.1

Community assets in the Dutch context

Four characteristics of Gypsy-Travelers in the Netherlands stand out from my previous experiences. Moreover, all four have been confirmed by Gypsy-Travelers themselves and by the professionals working with them:

- the need for independence,
- the sense of community (extended family),
- the trading culture, and
- the role of family arts and crafts.

These characteristics reflect norms, values, and cultural traits, and therefore can be seen as cultural or community assets. The Gypsy-Travelers highly valued these aspects of their culture (Sollie et al., 2013; Movisie, 2013), although the professionals were more critical. The need for independence, particularly, was looked upon critically by the professionals, who seemed to share the view that “cultivation” of this feature served as “justification for remaining below the radar” (observations during my work for the Ministry of the Interior, 2011-2014). Some professionals went so far as to question whether Travelers could be considered a cultural group, stating that traveling “*used to be a way of life*” (author’s italics). This, however, contradicts the EU’s official recognition of Gypsies and Travelers as minorities (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010). To acknowledge the communities’ potential values, practitioners will have to challenge

these negative discourses. Good practices, involving community and individual success stories, could provide arguments to support this. In this paper I deliberately follow the logic of good practices for two reasons. First, it is not my goal to define ‘best practices’ and value one good practice over another. The second reason is that ‘bad practices’, on the other hand, were sufficiently discussed in policy arenas in all three building blocks, showing the need for good examples.

7.5.2

Good practices and conceptualization of impacts

The four above-mentioned community assets can be illustrated by presenting good practices from the Dutch case. The first asset, the need for independence, can stimulate learning in later life, enabling community members to remain independent, especially from the government. In Hilversum, I came across an older Traveler woman in her 70s who had then (2010) recently received a certificate for reading and writing achievement at the primary school level. She had never attended school or had any other formal education, which is quite common especially for older Gypsy-Travelers (Khonraad, 2000; Timmermans and Van den Hurk, 2002). She had always worked in her husband’s mobile pancake stall. She explained that reading and writing had become essential skills in her everyday life, and not being able to read or write threatened her independence and self-determination. To maintain the independence she had always enjoyed, she took a literacy course. After completing it, she felt more in control of her life: “Now the government can’t fool me that easily, not anymore!” A degree of

distrust towards the government and the need to remain independent had stimulated her to become better equipped for interactions with government. This is a positive outcome, yet it is also in line with Sibley's (1998) observation that Gypsy-Travelers integrate on their own terms. In the interactions between settled society institutions and the Traveler woman, writing and reading were not thought of as mutually useful; they were seen as *modi operandi* to disadvantage Gypsy-Travelers. Her independence was the personal motivation to become literate, though she regarded the settled society's norms and expectations as ill-natured.

The second asset, the sense of community (based on the extended family), is illustrated by the custom for Gypsy-Travelers' extended families to provide many "proxy users," that is, people who assist in the use of certain machines, devices, or applications (Salemink, 2016). During my fieldwork with communities in Emmen it became clear that older Gypsy-Travelers had been able to negotiate the impact of digitalization and computerization with the help of younger members of the extended family who lived on the site. Both Gypsy-Travelers and the professionals who worked with them noted this family support system as being an important feature of Gypsy-Traveler culture. This sense of community (or family) had helped them to deal with change, making the older individuals, and with that the community as a whole, more resilient.

The third community asset, the trading culture, plays a role in many family histories (Lucassen et al., 1998). It is in this asset that marginality is most prominent, as only the undesirable merchandise is left to be traded by the Gypsy-Travelers (Sibley, 1995).

Gypsy-Travelers in Emmen commented that they were forced to become self-employed and go into "trading anything that was tradable in order to sustain their livelihood" (fieldwork 2013–2014). Gypsy-Travelers avoided the topic of illicit or illegal trading and entrepreneurship during interviews, but social workers confirmed that illegal activities were not uncommon. Recent studies corroborate the presence of illegal activities at Gypsy-Traveler sites (VROM Inspectie, 2009; Sollie et al., 2013). When asked about entrepreneurship, a community gatekeeper in Emmen said, "It's not a problem to be on welfare, as long as you do something to make your own money." This "working for your own money" can be viewed as an illicit activity, since individuals who work are not allowed to receive welfare benefits. Yet, more controversially, it shows that Gypsy-Travelers are able and willing to work, and suggests that receiving benefits does not render them structurally inactive. To stress once again, the aim of this paper is not to condone illegal activity. Rather, in line with, for example, Williams (2006) and Somerville et al. (2015), it calls for recognition of behavior and assets that could potentially contribute to community resilience in a positive and acceptable way.

The fourth community asset, family arts and crafts, is related to the trading culture, yet the value of the arts and crafts is generally recognized by settled society (Cottaar et al., 1992). Throughout history, Gypsy-Travelers have specialized in certain arts, such as dance and music, and crafts, such as repairs and recycling. They traveled while employing these skills to serve the settled communities. Many Gypsy-Travelers considered this to be at the heart of their culture (inter-

views during my ethnographic fieldwork in Emmen, 2013-2014). Some of these arts and crafts have lost their economic significance in recent decades (Salemink, 2014). Recently, however, a revival seems to have gotten under way, for example, with the organization of Gypsy-Traveler festivals and projects celebrating Gypsy-Traveler art and culture, such as the yearly International Gypsy Festival in Tilburg (founded in 1997; www.gipsyfestival.nl), the Appleby Horse Fair (www.applebyfair.org), and the Amber Collective in northeastern England (Hollands and Vail, 2015). These have increased the popularity of traditional Gypsy-Traveler arts, especially, and, to a lesser extent, traditional crafts. This celebration of Gypsy-Traveler culture is not necessarily a widespread phenomenon, but it has provided opportunities for Gyp-

sy-Travelers to rediscover the potential of their arts and crafts. Furthermore, such a revival can positively contribute to the cultural self-esteem of Gypsy-Travelers. Considering the ‘loss of control’ which many Gypsy-Travelers experienced throughout recent decades, this could prove to be a valuable asset for community development.

Table 7.2 presents the four community assets, and their potential for enhancing the communities’ economies and their resilience. It should be noted that these characteristics or assets are not necessarily exclusive to the Gypsy-Traveler culture, as there are other cultures with similar characteristics. They do, however, play a prominent role in the everyday lives of many Gypsy-Travelers.

Table 7.2 | Framework for assessing community assets and their potential for enhancing the communities’ economies and their resilience

Community Asset	Potential for Community Economy	Potential Impact on Resilience
Independence	Social and economic independence Self-reliance	Social sustainability Independent living
Sense of Community (extended family)	Community or family support system Family business tradition	Dealing with change Social capital (bonding)
Trading Culture	Mercantilism Recognizing potential markets	Creativity in tough times Changing strategies
Family Crafts	Craftsmanship and skills Oral tradition and education Family tradition as a (legitimate) business opportunity	Combining family tradition and self-employment Bridging social capital through festivals and fairs

7.6 Community building versus promoting integration?

This paper has built a framework on and argument for recognizing the assets of Gypsy-Traveler communities so as to better understand the potential role of marginal entrepreneurship in community building and the economic position of Gypsy-Traveler communities. Based on the literature and the author's own experiences as a practitioner and researcher, potential relationships and impacts were theorized. The traditional and somewhat "mythical" view of Gypsy-Traveler culture (Shubin and Swanson, 2010), including its hidden economy (Sibley, 1998), now seems to be outdated – if it ever was valid. A community-based approach can provide insights into current everyday life and livelihoods. Furthermore, in times of rapidly developing technologies, which affect the livelihoods of families, it seems appropriate to revisit the economic opportunities open to Gypsy-Travelers.

Practitioners will be better able to unlock these community assets, if they become more aware of the marginal specializations of the communities they are working with. Herein lies a task for academics. The framework presented in Table 7.2 explores community assets that could be seized upon to enhance community resilience, though at this point it is still quite general and does insufficient justice to local differences, or to family differences for that matter. Furthermore, this paper is based on the Dutch context. Its insights are therefore to some extent limited to this context. Gypsy-Travelers in Europe

share a history of exclusion and marginalization (Cottaar et al., 1992; Sibley, 1995), but national contexts differ too much to be able to generalize about them. In countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium it is still quite common for Gypsy-Travelers to actually travel (Shubin, 2011). Seizing the community assets and building on them locally is expected to be more of a challenge in these more mobile national context. To capture these contextual differences, synergy among practitioners and academics will be needed, combining experiences from the field with knowledge creation.

More research with Gypsy-Travelers is needed to gain a better understanding of the potential of community assets. From an economic perspective, two cross-community groups are of interest in this regard. The first group is made up of those who run a legal business: To what extent have cultural or community assets contributed to their business activities? The second group comprises those running an illicit or illegal business, and the same question applies to them. It would also be interesting to assess the economic and community value that these groups create, since they have only recently been recognized as contributors to local and community economies. The work of Williams (2006) and Somerville et al. (2015) provide elaborated conceptual bases for further analysis of the second group.

Viewing the complicated issues from a strategic level, it appears policies based on the aims of the Civilizing Offensive are unlikely to promote recognition of the assets of sedentarized traveling communities (see also Powell, 2013b). Essentially, the process of civilization precludes recognition of the value of certain forms of behavior, behavior

that perhaps deviates from the norms of settled society. The framework in Table 7.2 demonstrated the potential that community assets constitutes for the communities' economies and resilience, but other and more negative features can also be pointed out. Furthermore, the identification and strengthening of community assets may lead to exposure and reproduction of differences between the settled and traveling society. In this sense, community building and promoting integration may represent conflicting objectives. Within this conflict lies the key challenge for practitioners, such as liaison officers and policymakers: to temper the contradictory effects of enhancing community-specific assets and policies for promoting integration. The discussion here indicates that this issue should at least be on the policy agenda, though in the Netherlands this is not the case.

The terms used in Table 7.2 can also be framed more negatively to show the downsides of Gypsy-Traveler culture and, obviously, the settled society is right to disapprove of criminal behavior and punish criminals accordingly if this is the case. Here I state again that I refrain myself from normative statements about what should be regarded as criminal, but I hope that this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Gypsy-Traveler culture. Further, I hope that if a community asset is used for a criminal offense, it does not rule out the application of that community asset for legal purposes.

During one of my visits to a Gypsy-Traveler site, a Traveler summed up the social and economic position of his community by saying "Weeds don't die." It is time to recognize the weed as a flower, one that has proven quite resilient indeed.

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